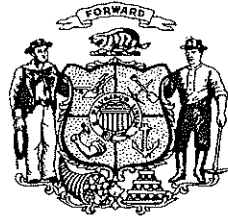


STATE OF WISCONSIN

SENATE CHAIR
Howard Marklein

316 East, State Capitol
P.O. Box 7882
Madison, WI 53707-7882
Phone: (608) 266-0703



ASSEMBLY CHAIR
Mark Born

308 East, State Capitol
P.O. Box 8952
Madison, WI 53708-8953
Phone: (608) 266-2540

JOINT COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

MEMORANDUM

To: Members
Joint Committee on Finance

From: Senator Howard Marklein
Representative Mark Born

Date: June 30, 2023

Re: DCF Report to JFC

Attached is a report detailing the status of the early care and education programs funded by Wisconsin's CCDBG awards under CRRSA and ARPA from the Department of Children and Families.

This report is being provided for your information only. No action by the Committee is required. Please feel free to contact us if you have any questions.

Attachments

HM:MB;jm

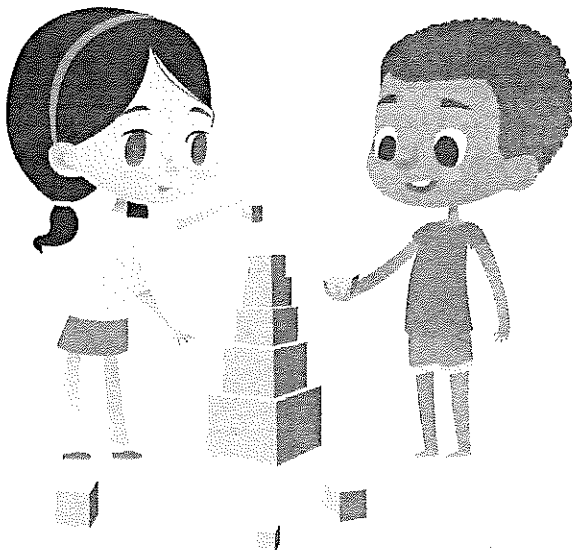
Early Care and Education Programs Funded by DCF's ARPA CCDBG Awards

JUN 30 2023

J. Finance

Status Report to the Joint
Committee on Finance

June 30, 2023



Wisconsin Department of
Children and Families



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Introduction

Since spring 2020, the Evers Administration has invested over \$860 million in federal relief funding to support early care and education. This includes Wisconsin's Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG) awards provided by the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSA), and the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), the ARPA Child Care Stabilization Funding, and CARES Act funding provided directly by Governor Evers. This report details the status of each of the early care and education programs funded by Wisconsin's awards under ARPA. The following page outlines the series of ARPA funding requests submitted by the Department of Children and Families (DCF) and approved by the Joint Committee on Finance (JFC).

Strategic Framework

DCF uses the areas of **access, affordability, quality, and the workforce** as a framework for evaluating and transforming early care and education in Wisconsin.

Each of the federal relief funding programs contained in this report are grounded in this framework and were developed in response to needs identified by stakeholders.



Procedural History

In March 2021, the federal government enacted the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) of 2021, which provided \$23.9 billion under CCDBG for supporting the stability of the child care sector during and after the COVID-19 public health emergency. Wisconsin's allocation of this funding included \$357 million for Child Care Stabilization Grants and \$223.2 million for CCDBG Supplemental Discretionary Funds. ARPA Stabilization Grant funding was required to be obligated by September 30, 2022, and ARPA CCDBG Supplemental Discretionary Funds must be obligated by September 30, 2023.

There have been two spending authority requests to JFC under s.16.54, Wis. Stats., for Wisconsin's ARPA awards designated for the child care sector. Following a passive review process, the s.16.54 request submitted on October 13, 2021 regarding the Child Care Stabilization Grant funding was approved by JFC on November 2, 2021. Following the submission of the s.16.54 request regarding ARPA Supplemental Discretionary CCDBG funds on December 3, 2021 (see Legislative Fiscal Bureau paper on the request), JFC passed a motion approving a modified version of the request during a Section 13.10 Meeting held on February 9, 2022.

Below is a list of all ARPA-funded programs that JFC approved, as well as the original budgets for each program. JFC also approved DCF to reallocate any underspending from ARPA-funded programs toward DCF's Child Care Counts programs. The final budget amounts for each program may change up to the federal obligation deadline of September 30, 2023.



Outline of Programs and Approved Budget by Fund Source

Funding Source	Program Title	Original Approved Budget	Budget after Underspend Re-Allocated to CCC
ARPA Stabilization Grant \$357 million	Child Care Counts: Stabilization Payment Program	\$351,650,000	\$353,909,147
	Administrative Costs	\$5,355,000	\$3,095,853
ARPA CCDBG Supplemental Discretionary Funds \$223.2 million	Wisconsin Shares Rate Increase	\$29,200,000	\$18,200,000
	Child Care Counts: Stabilization Payment Program	\$108,898,874	\$109,831,285
	Child Care Counts: Payment Program C: Promoting Inclusive Spaces	\$3,500,000	\$3,453,175
	WEESN	\$8,400,000	\$8,400,000
	Employee Assistance Program (EAP)	\$906,760	\$900,000
	T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood Wisconsin	\$6,780,000	\$6,780,000
	REWARD Wisconsin	\$23,850,000	\$23,850,000
	Partner Up! Grants	\$10,000,000	\$10,000,000
	Birth to 3 Child Care Pilot	\$15,977,731	\$15,977,731
	Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation (IECMHC)	\$5,000,000	\$4,708,623
	School-Age Mental Health Supports	\$480,000	\$480,000
	Family Resource Centers	\$4,800,000	\$4,212,546
	Unregulated Provider Assistance	\$2,500,000	\$2,500,000
	Administrative Costs	\$2,918,173	\$2,918,173

The following report details the status of each of the programs funded by ARPA approved by JFC.



Initial Launch of Child Care Counts

The Child Care Counts program was initially launched in spring 2020 with funding provided by the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act. Through CARES Act funding, the Child Care Counts COVID-19 Emergency Payment Program delivered nearly \$51 million of relief funding to 2,712 child care providers statewide during spring and summer of 2020; and the Child Care Counts COVID-19 Supplementary Payment Program delivered over \$79.7 million to 2,879 providers during fall 2020. Subsequently, DCF ran the Child Care Counts COVID-19 Response & Relief Payment Program with CRRSA funding in spring 2021, which issued over \$110.3 million to 3,274 providers.

DCF began running the ARPA-funded Child Care Counts COVID-19 Stabilization Payment Program on a monthly basis beginning in November 2021. These critical investments continue to help stabilize Wisconsin's early care and education system and the economy by countering the alarming loss of available child care at the onset of the pandemic, allowing child care providers to stay open to offer high-quality child care for Wisconsin families, and keeping parents and caregivers in the workforce.

As ARPA funding for the program ends, and without additional state investments in the Child Care Counts program, payments decreased to approximately 50% for the final 9 months of the program beginning in May 2023. According to a [survey](#) of nearly 1,200 Wisconsin early care and education providers from the National Association for the Education of Young Children, more than 27 percent of providers reported that their program would have closed without the stabilization grants. When the grants end, more than 60 percent of child care directors say they will have to raise tuition on families and another more than 33 percent say they will have to cut wages or will be unable to sustain wages/salary increases for their staff. Over 2,500 respondents to a [survey](#) of Child Care Counts recipients conducted by the Institute for Research on Poverty reported positive impacts of the program, including on their ability to stay open, improve child safety and well-being, increase capacity, improve program quality, and retain high-quality staff.

Child Care Counts Payment Dashboard

Visit DCF's [Child Care Counts Payment Dashboard](#) to see payments broken down by funding program, by county, and by provider.



Child Care Counts: COVID-19 Stabilization Payment Program

\$353.9 million ARPA CCDBG Stabilization Grant funds

\$109.8 million ARPA Supplemental Discretionary CCDBG funds

As of June 1, 2023...



Amount distributed:
\$352,937,900



Child care providers
receiving funds:
4,315 statewide



ECE professionals helped to remain
employed or become employed:



Enabled child care to continue for:
over 223,000 children

Through the Child Care Counts:
COVID-19 Stabilization

Payment Program launched in
November 2021, regulated
child care providers will be
eligible to receive monthly
payments through January ,
2024 to provide the financial
stability needed to stay open, to
recruit and retain qualified
staff, and to continue providing
high-quality care for children.

See program Terms and
Conditions here.

Payment Program A: Increasing Access to High-Quality Care

- Per-child payments to providers to cover operating expenses and quality improvements based on age, part or full-time enrollment, and participating in Shares
- Allowable funding uses include operating expenses to remain open or reopen (mortgage, rent/space costs, utilities, insurance, business-related taxes, and payroll/benefits), COVID-19 mitigation, materials/supplies for enhancing program environment and curriculum, mental health services for children and employees, and providing relief from copayments and tuition payments for families

Payment Program B: Funding Workforce Recruitment and Retention

- Per-staff payments to enhance staff compensation and professional development opportunities based on part or full-time employment and YoungStar rating
- Allowable uses of funding include wages, bonuses, benefits, professional development, training, scholarships, and continuing education

In accordance with the February 9, 2022 JFC motion approving a modified version of the s.16.54 request regarding ARPA Supplemental Discretionary CCDBG funds, any underspending in other programs is being redirected to the Child Care Counts program.



\$3.45 million ARPA Supplemental Discretionary CCDBG funds

The **Child Care Counts: Payment Program C—Promoting Inclusive Spaces Grant Program** offered a one-time payment to eligible providers in order to support making programs more accessible to children with disabilities. Program C funds can be used by providers to:

- Update facilities to increase physical accessibility for children with disabilities or developmental delays. Examples of allowable uses include adding an accessible ramp, installing handrails, widening doorways, and altering lighting or paint.
- Purchasing supplies and materials to accommodate the needs of children with disabilities or developmental delays to allow them to fully participate in the child care program. Examples of allowable uses include purchasing adaptive toys and materials, purchasing furniture that promotes accessibility, or purchasing assistive technology.

To ease the burden on providers applying for funding through multiple platforms, DCF incorporated this grant application into the existing Child Care Counts application infrastructure that providers are familiar with. A one-time application for Program C funding opened in March 2023, with payments issued in April 2023. Any regulated child care program was eligible to apply.

Overall, \$3,453,175 was issued to nearly 2,500 child care programs. Family child care programs received \$1,000 grants, and group child care programs received \$1,675 grants. The remaining \$47k from the original budget was redirected to the Child Care Counts: Stabilization Payment Program.





\$8.4 million ARPA Supplemental Discretionary CCDBG funds

DCF contracted with WECA to support the development and expansion of the Wisconsin Early Education Shared Services Network (WEESSN). WEESSN brings



together family and center-based early care and education programs to pool resources and leverage economies of scale. By sharing resources, knowledge, and expertise, child care programs can save time and money. Being a part of a network allows child care programs to be big where big is important (purchasing and resources sharing) while still staying small, where small is everything – providing care and

education within the communities they serve, the way they know best.

WEESSN offers a variety of services based on provider needs in three tiered levels of service. ARPA funding allows all regulated family and group child care providers to join at no cost to themselves. Services available in each tier are listed on the following page.

WEESSN has engaged with an outside evaluator to obtain quantitative feedback from members through surveys, interviews, and focus groups. In coordination with partners and other stakeholders, WEESSN is continuing to plan for long-term sustainability and expansion of the network and member cohorts.

As of June 1, 23, WECA has liquidated \$1.4M of their \$8.4M ARPA award.

\$900,000 ARPA Supplemental Discretionary CCDBG funds

Educator Assistance Program

Educator Assistance Program (EAP) services were developed and made available to early childhood professionals who work in a WEESSN-enrolled child care program and their family/household members as of January 1, 2023. WEESSN's EAP services are available in both English and Spanish, and offer free and confidential access to mental health consultation and short-term counseling, work/life services such as legal and financial consultation, health and wellness coaching, and more. Since its launch, WEESSN's EAP service has served over 60 early childhood professionals. Approximately \$223,000 has been liquidated as of June 1, 2023.



Wisconsin Early Education Shared Services Network (cont.)

Tier 1: Communication

- FREE WISER resource site access: Tools, templates, and resources to help you run your business wiser. Created for both family providers and group centers, the site aids in program management, policies, business practices, and curriculum
- FREE job postings through Aquire4Hire on eight employment sites, including Indeed, LinkedIn, and Google
- Discounted purchasing through Savings4Members at Discount School Supplies, Lakeshore Learning, Kaplan, Childcraft, School Specialty, Ace Hardware and more
- FREE quarterly trainings to help you learn how to maximize Tier 1 membership
- FREE WEESN Wrap-Up newsletter: Up-to-date information from Department of Children and Families, professional development opportunities, early childhood advocacy updates, and more summarized in easy-to-read language tailored just for you
- Recipes and resources to encourage healthy eating and creative nutrition programming through the WEESN Farm-to-ECE newsletter

Tier 2: Cooperation

- All Tier 1 services, plus:
- FREE virtual coaching: WEESN Tier 2 Coaches are available to answer questions and provide resources for you
- FREE Docs by Phone: Mental/physical health support
- FREE registration for the annual WECA Conference (1 per program)
- FREE virtual professional development
- FREE 6-month introduction to Early Learning Ventures (ELV) Child Care Management Software (results in \$1,050 to \$1,500 in provider savings)

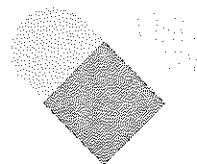
*Tier 2 members must first join Tier 1

Tier 3: Collaboration

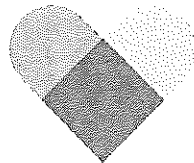
- All Tier 1 and Tier 2 services, plus:
- FREE in-person and virtual coaching
- FREE Farm-to-ECE programming
- FREE full access to ELV Child Care Management Software
- FREE Back-office billing/tuition collection services
- Relief Squad substitute teacher access.

*Tier 3 services are currently available in some Wisconsin counties.

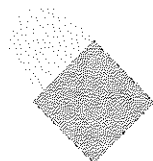
As of June 2023, WEESN members include:



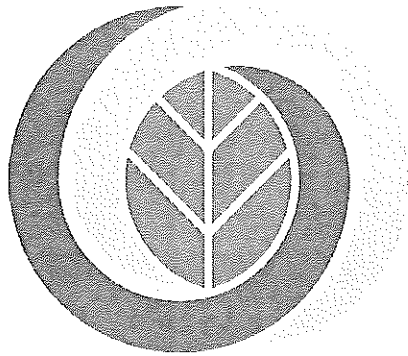
1,622 child care programs
enrolled in Tier 1



275 child care programs
enrolled in Tier 2



298 child care programs
enrolled in Tier 3



PROJECT GROWTH

WISCONSIN FAMILIES ARE A GOOD INVESTMENT

Project Growth is an initiative that brings together businesses, communities, and other early care and education partners to help solve the challenges facing Wisconsin's child care system and bolster the state's economy. The components of Project Growth are funded by CRRSA, ARPA, and DCF's federal Preschool Development Grant Birth to Five (PDG B-5) award.

Partner Up! Grant Program

\$10 million CRRSA funding

\$10 million ARPA Supplemental Discretionary CCDBG funds

\$2 million PDG B-5 award

\$5.5 million Quality Jobs, Equity, Strategy, and Training Grant (QUEST)

The Partner Up! grant program provides funding to support partnerships between businesses and regulated child care providers through the purchase of child care slots for employees. The funding from this program can be used to increase staff compensation, pay expenses, reserve child care slots for local business employees, improve the quality of a child care program, and more. DCF contracted with SFTA to administer the Partner Up! grant program, in partnership with Wisconsin's nine Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies (CCR&Rs). CCR&Rs have worked with interested businesses and child care programs in their regions and provided ongoing support to program participants. SFTA administers the program and issues the payments.

DCF launched two cohorts using CRRSA and ARPA funding in fiscal year 2022. A large amount of interest was received with over 660 Partner Up! applications. While funding was limited, DCF was able to award 220 businesses 3 to 12 month long contracts. The funding was awarded based on existing community child care needs throughout Wisconsin. To view the list of Partner Up! grant recipients, visit DCF's Project Growth webpage.



Project Growth

Partner Up! Grant Expansion



In order to sustain and expand this program, DCF launched a third cohort this year with an increased business contribution and the possibility of a 10% parent contribution. The third cohort obligated the remaining \$6M ARPA and \$1M PDG funding to renew current business contracts, and \$5.5M QUEST funding for new businesses to participate in the program. Nearly 400 applications were received with 75% of businesses from Cohorts 1 and 2 applying to renew. Although funding for Cohort 3 is limited, DCF awarded grants to communities and businesses in each region of the state, with an emphasis on areas deemed child care deserts.

As an additional part of this program, DCF Business Child Care Advocates work at Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) agencies across the state to help connect local communities, businesses, and child care providers, find sustainable solutions and recommend best practices. Organizations and communities can also access the Business-Child Care Partnership Tool Kit for further information.

As of June 1, 2023, \$11.95M of the \$27.5M total funding across all sources has been liquidated. \$886k in ARPA funding has been liquidated. Funding from all sources must be liquidated by September 30, 2024.

Visit ProjectGrowth.WI.gov to learn more



Wisconsin Shares Rate Increase

\$18.2M ARPA Supplemental Discretionary CCDBG funds

The Wisconsin Shares child care subsidy program, which receives most of its funding from federal sources, supports eligible families by funding a portion of the cost of child care while the parents are working or participating in an approved activity.

ARPA funding was allocated to Wisconsin Shares subsidies as part of 2021 Act 58, the 2021-23 biennial budget, which allowed DCF to increase maximum rates for the Wisconsin Shares child care subsidies in January 2023 so that all rates were at least at the 80th percentile of the market rate for each age group. \$18.2M of the allocated funds will be liquidated in SFY23.



\$6.78 million ARPA Supplemental Discretionary CCDBG funds

T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood Wisconsin provides higher education scholarships to professionals who work in regulated early childhood and school age care settings. Since its inception in 1999, T.E.A.C.H. has provided nearly 16,000 scholarships to over 10,500 early childhood teachers to attend credit-based courses.

DCF has contracted with WECA for T.E.A.C.H. to make qualifying educational pathways nearly free for early childhood educators pursuing credit-based education through ARPA funding. Beginning with the Fall 2022 semester, several T.E.A.C.H. program reimbursements, stipends, and bonuses increased, making T.E.A.C.H. participation an even more powerful package of supports to assist ECE professionals with higher education.

Some of the key changes include:

- 90% book reimbursement
- Release time reimbursed at \$15.00/hour (15 hours per semester)
- \$100 travel stipend each semester
- Bonuses increased by \$100
- Full payment of Registry commission fee
- One-time technology stipend
- Stipend to each sponsoring center and family child care program



As of June 1, 2023, WECA had expended \$2.26M, which allowed them to award 880 scholarships. Scholarship recipients include 66 Spanish speakers and 480 first-time recipients. Recipients identified the top 4 benefits of the scholarship as: being able to afford to go to school, increasing understanding of child development, job preparation, and earning degrees, credentials, or Department of Public Instruction (DPI) licensure).



\$23.85 million ARPA Supplemental Discretionary CCDBG funds

REWARD Wisconsin provides early childhood educator salary supplements based on educational attainments and longevity in the field. The goal of the stipend program is to increase overall compensation of early childhood educators, reward, retain and encourage professionals who have attained education in their field; reduce turnover; and improve quality of care.

DCF has contracted with WECA to significantly expand eligibility for the REWARD program with ARPA funding, allowing the program to financially support a majority of Wisconsin's early childhood educators at higher stipend amounts. There are several eligibility changes, including:

- The wage cap has been eliminated
- Stipend amounts have increased

Longevity at the current child care program has reduced to six months

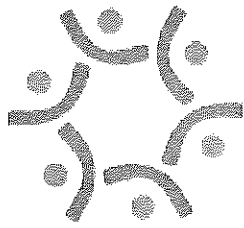
- All levels of The Registry are eligible
- Applicants no longer need program representative approval on applications

These changes took effect summer 2022. As of June 1, 2023, WECA has liquidated \$9.93M of their ARPA award, allowing distribution of over 14,000 stipends averaging over \$600. Recipient educators work at over 1,650 child care programs in 71 counties.





\$4.2 million ARPA Supplemental Discretionary CCDBG funds



CHILD ABUSE & NEGLECT

Prevention Board

Family Resource Centers (FRCs) are community-based, flexible, family-focused, and culturally sensitive hubs that provide access to resources, programs, and targeted services based on the needs and interests of families. The FRCs across Wisconsin provide parents and caregivers with parent education, tools, and strategies around healthy child development, and they can also provide invaluable information and navigation for community resources.

This funding is administered by the Wisconsin Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Board (CANPB), which provides grants to FRCs. The funded FRCs provide programming and services designed to strengthen families and build family protective factors such as social and emotional competence of children, knowledge of parenting and child development, social connections, parental resilience, and concrete supports in times of need.

During SFY23, FRCs held professional development trainings regarding perinatal mental health, play groups, ethics and boundaries, and cultural humility. They also hosted Parent Cafes as supports for parents and caregivers of young children.

As of June 1, 2023, CANPB has spent \$532,248 of their award. Due to foreseeable underspending in these programs, the total subaward to CANPB was adjusted from \$4.8M to \$4.2M. Underspending was reallocated to Child Care Counts.



\$480,000 ARPA Supplemental Discretionary CCDBG funds



The Wisconsin Afterschool Network (WAN) is providing school-age child care programs throughout the state with training and technical assistance around topics such as mental health and trauma-informed care. WAN maintains in-person and virtual infrastructure for supporting providers, especially as they address the changing social and emotional needs of school-age children in care.

As part of this contract, WAN will provide several in-person trainings regarding children's mental health, two statewide conferences focusing on mental health and equity, a summer institute with tailored content for day camp programs, and virtual learning events focused on behavioral health, equity, and social determinants of health. WAN will also support individuals and programs who care for school-age children through technical assistance and regional professional learning collaboratives.

WAN launched trainings in July 2022, and have served over 500 participants as of April 2023. In November 2022, WAN held the first of two statewide conferences with over 350 participants. The second conference is currently scheduled for November 2023. The summer institute for day camp programs was held in March 2023, and a Social Determinants of Health mini-conference was held in April 2023.

As of June 1, 2023, WAN has liquidated \$237,595 of their award.



\$4.7 million ARPA Supplemental Discretionary CCDBG funds

IECMHC is an evidence-based intervention that pairs mental health professionals with early childhood educators and families to support young children's social and emotional needs and address challenging behaviors.

Following a procurement process, DCF contracted with the Wisconsin Alliance for Infant Mental Health (WI-AIMH) to build an infrastructure to hire, train, and track credentials of mental health consultants; to coordinate service requests and referrals of mental health consultants to child care programs across the state; and to collect data regarding the impact of the program.

Since their contract began in January 2023, WI-AIMH has established a cross-sector advisory council to assist in developing the program, developed a logic model for the program, and have begun the process of hiring mental health consultants.

WI-AIMH has liquidated \$284,248 of their award, as of June 1, 2023. \$291k in foreseeable underspending was reallocated to Child Care Counts.

Additionally, the Department is in the process of contracting with the Office of Children's Mental Health (OCMH) for technical assistance in designing the IECMHC network and with The Registry to capture workforce data related to infant and early childhood mental health consultants.

Wisconsin Alliance for
Infant Mental Health





\$15.9 million ARPA Supplemental Discretionary CCDBG funds

The Inclusive Birth to 3 Child Care Pilot supports the cost of child care for a limited number of children with disabilities and developmental delays who participate in the Department of Health Services' (DHS) Birth to 3 Program. This program supports families of children participating in the Birth to 3 Program in finding regulated, high-quality child care and helps reduce the financial hardship of child care tuition. Additionally, this program connects the Birth to 3 program and child care providers to ensure supports are available to foster healthy growth, development, and well-being. Lastly, the pilot provides ongoing and steady revenue for the duration of the pilot to child care providers who care for children with special needs.

The Inclusive Birth to 3 Child Care Pilot began issuing child care authorizations in Crawford, Grant, Green, Iowa, Jefferson, Lafayette, and Rock counties on August 1, 2022. The program was expanded statewide on October 1, 2022. New authorizations will be issued to children participating in the DHS Birth to 3 program through June 30, 2023. Participating families receive an authorization for 12 months of child care subsidy. Following the authorization period, DCF will work with families to transition to Wisconsin Shares as much as is possible.

As of June 1, 2023, there were 970 children authorized for child care through the program. We expect to serve approximately 1000-1100 children by the end of the new-authorization period on June 30. \$3.62M in funding has been liquidated as of June 1. DCF estimates up to \$2M in underspending from this program will be reallocated to Child Care Counts.



\$2.5 million ARPA Supplemental Discretionary CCDBG funds

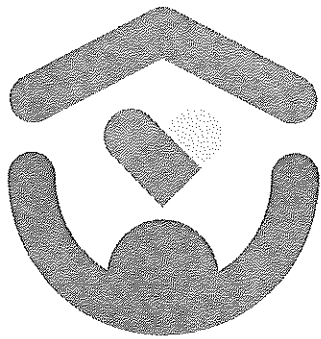
The Provider Assistance for Licensing program (PAL) aims to increase the number of licensed child care providers in the Northern and Western licensing regions. It is administered by the Wisconsin Early Childhood Association (WECA). The PAL program supports prospective or newly licensed child care providers' start-up and sustainability, connects them to available services, and increases public awareness on the benefits of licensed child care.

The program operates within a peer cohort model. PAL was launched in January of 2023 with Cohort #1 serving a total of 33 participants (13 are from the Northern Licensing Region and 21 from the Western). Of these 33, 12 plan to open Group Child Care programs and 21 plan to open Family Child Care programs. As of June 1, 2023, 7 participants have been granted licensure. Cohort #2 launched in June 2023 with 39 participants. WECA expects to launch 1-2 additional cohorts in the upcoming state fiscal year.

Participants meet regularly with a coach who assists them in navigating regulatory, educational, and business requirements in order to seek licensure. They have the option to participate in business training program to ensure strong foundational business and administrative practices. New child care entrepreneurs create a spending plans and are eligible for grant funding to purchase items needed to operate within health and safety requirements. These benefits ensure a strong business foundation in an industry that struggles with thin margins.

WECA has spent \$324,175 as of June 1, 2023.





Wisconsin Department of
Children and Families